

Saturday, April 30, 16

Thought on Hiroshima:

Did the MP scientists applaud and celebrate the dropping the bomb on Hiroshima? Wait, yes, precisely so (not Trinity: though their “curiosity”—see Weiszacker—should have been satisfied by Trinity. PU warhead.) How about Nagasaki?

The real reason for the extreme rush, AFTER May 8 (German surrender): to get the bomb onto Japan BEFORE the war ended for other reasons: surrender terms, SU entry on August 8 or 15! It wasn't to save lives; hardly any lives were scheduled to be lost (or had to be risked, as in the continued USAF raids, including Aug. 14, which could have been cancelled; ironically, the main lives lost—a significant number!—were on Indianapolis, after its mission of taking the nuclear components to Tinian!)

First invasion wasn't scheduled until November. Okinawa was over. The subsequent claim that the aim was “getting the war over as soon as possible, with least loss of US lives” was just a fraud, when it came to rushing the bomb to be dropped before, say, October, rather than August.

It was **fear that there wouldn't be a chance to use the bomb if it weren't ready before Aug. 8** that drove the crash effort.

Fear (not among most of the scientists, who didn't know the Japanese were seeking surrender terms, negotiated ending) in those who wanted to:

intimidate the SU (, Stimson, Byrnes, Truman);

end the war by the Bombs, for the glory and legitimacy of the Project and the scientists (many of the scientists, if not all; including Conant, who wanted specifically to show the Harvard Corporation why he had been absent so often from his duties as President of Harvard) ;

demonstrate lethality to the world, to promote international control (Oppenheimer, Conant,);

show a USAF end to the war (along with the 1000-plane raid and the preceding five months of firebombing), for purposes of a large postwar Air Force, an independent USAF, strategic bombing doctrine, share of budget (USAF);

justify the cost of the Project (Truman, Byrnes, Groves)...

But suppose the Bombs had been ready and dropped in mid-July, a few weeks earlier; long enough in advance of the Soviet entry that the first two or three Bombs would NOT have promptly ended the war (until the soviet entry!. **How would the**

scientists have felt then? As they heard reports of civilian deaths, unaccompanied by surrender? (After all, many in the Army thought that ten bombs might be necessary, in any case; the immediate surrender was a surprise to most (like K's "surrender" on Sunday, Oct. 28, 1962).

Would it even have been easy to argue that the Bombs had contributed to the surrender AT ALL? They would not have killed, immediately, more than the comparable firebomb raids: not Tokyo, but some others either. (Only Kokura, Niiagata, Kyoto would have remained unbombed, to show big effects. Tokyo, again. Kyoto, finally?) After that, they would have "bouncing the rubble," burning burned-over cities (probably evacuated).

As it was, the exact timing of the availability of the bombs—after the crash effort in May and June and July—was fortuitously simultaneous with the (unheralded, in the US, in terms of prospect or significance to the Japanese), in precisely the way that would maximize the impression of their being a "war-winner," both justified and glorious, to be thanked and celebrated.

Three weeks earlier—or a month later (after SU entry had led the Japanese to approach the US directly for surrender terms)—a different story! Different trajectory for the world. (Possibly not in every way better: but odds are, yes).